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THE RHODE ISLAND STATUES IN THE CAPITOL.

REMARKS

OF

HON. HENRY B. ANTHONY,

ON THE

PRESENTATION OF THE STATUE OF MAJ. GEN. GREENE,

January 20, 1870,

AND THE

PRESENTATION OF THE STATUE OF ROGER WILLIAMS,

January 9, 1872,

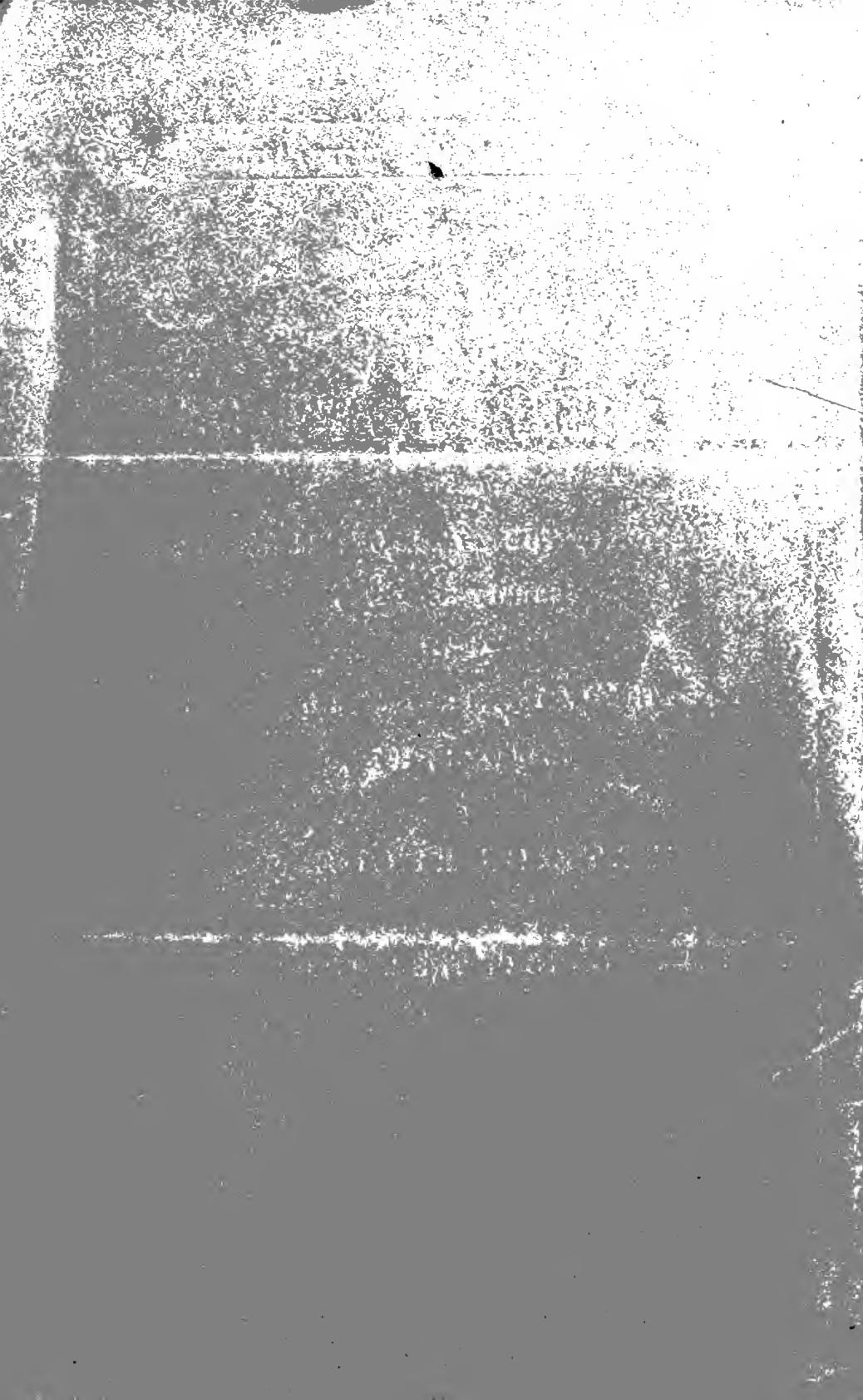
BY

THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

TO

THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

WASHINGTON:
F. & J. RIVES & GEO. A. BAILEY,
REPORTERS AND PRINTERS OF THE DEBATES OF CONGRESS.
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PRESENTATION

OF THE

STATUE OF MAJOR GENERAL GREENE.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, JANUARY 20, 1870.

Mr. President, I am charged—we are charged, my colleagues of the two Houses of Congress and myself—by the Governor of the State which we represent, with the honorable duty of presenting to Congress, in his name and in the name of the General Assembly and the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, a marble statue of Nathanael Greene.

This statue has been placed in the old Hall of the House of Representatives, in pursuance of an act of Congress, by which that beautiful Chamber, itself rich in precious memories, is dedicated to historic valor, to patriotism, to statesmanship, to learning, to conspicuous excellence in all the elements that constitute national greatness.

The heroic age of our country is enveloped in no fable, and the historian is not driven to doubtful miracles, to marvels and portents to add to the dignity of its origin, nor need he resort to fanciful legends to increase the interest of his narration. The stalwart men who planted the colonies from which these States arose have left the authentic memorials of their principles and their actions, their trials and their triumphs. And the men whose valor achieved the independence of the country, and whose wisdom founded the institutions of the great Republic, are separated from us by so short a period, and one of such active historical inquiry, that their lives and characters stand before us, almost as if they had lived in our daily presence.

By the act of Congress referred to, each State of the Union is invited to place in the old Hall of the House of Representatives the statues of two of her illustrious citizens, already consecrated by death, who flourished in any period of her history. Rhode Island, which has earliest responded to the invitation, has selected for this honor two of her early heroes, one from the colonial and one from the revolutionary period.

The first is Roger Williams, the great Founder of the State, who first declared and maintained the principle at the foundation of all true civilization, SOUL LIBERTY, the right of every man to worship God according to his own conscience, responsible to no human laws, restrained by no interposition of Church or State. Of Roger Williams there exists no portraiture, nor, so far as I am aware, any reliable description of his person or his features. He lives, not in the breathing marble or upon the glowing canvas, but immortal, in the everlasting principle which he first asserted and vindicated, and which, now recognized as an essential part of human society, was then regarded as nothing better than impracticable and mischievous fanaticism. The State, unwilling that the great name of her Founder should be unrepresented in this solemn assemblage of fame, has decreed in its commemoration an ideal statue, made from such scanty materials as tradition has supplied. She could do no more, and she felt that she should do no less.

In this respect the memory of Greene is more fortunate. His statue is from authentic likenesses, and represents him “in his habit as he lived,” in the full prime and vigor of his manhood, and in the height of his fame. It was executed by Henry Kirke Browne,

whose name, already of high reputation, will receive fresh honors from his latest work. As a product of American art it is confidently submitted to the judgment of criticism.

Mr. President, we have just passed through, not yet altogether through, the severest trial in the history of our country. The popular heart beats high with grateful admiration for valor and conduct proved in the field, for wisdom displayed in the cabinet. The country joyfully decorates her heroes with her freshest laurels, and heaps upon her soldiers and statesmen her selectest honors. We, Senators, interpreting the will of the nation, have been prompt to render, from this Chamber, our contributions to the national gratitude. And it is right that it should be so. The Republic is stronger as well as juster when thus honoring her defenders, and presenting such rewards to the emulation of the rising generation.

But while we render all due honor to living valor, while we proudly hand over to the Muse of History the mighty names that have illustrated our recent annals, it is well to freshen the recollection of those whose fame she has long had in her keeping. While we celebrate the praises of those who have saved the country, let us not forget those without whom we should not have had a country to be saved; those who, in the beginning, few in numbers, feeble in power, scant of resources, but strong in the principles which they had inherited with their oppressors, armed with the stern virtues that are born of difficulty and nurtured in peril and privation, dared to defy the might of England, who trod the pathway of victory with bleeding feet and upheld the banner of independence with hands that were wasted by famine.

While the names of Vicksburg, Fort Donelson, and Roanoake Island, South Mountain, and Antietam, and Gettysburg, and Appomattox, should be kept fresh in the memory of the country, let not the earlier glories of Lexington, and Bunker Hill, of Princeton, and Trenton, and Stony Point, of Cowpens and Eutaw Springs, of Saratoga and Yorktown, be ever forgotten; nor yet those of Chippewa, Plattsburg, and New Orleans.

Among those who, in the revolutionary period, won titles to the national gratitude never disavowed, he whose statue we have placed in the Capitol stands, in the judgment of his contemporaries and by the assent of history, second only to the man who towers, without a peer, in the annals of America.

I shall not attempt an analysis of his character, nor an enumeration of the great deeds upon which his fame securely rests; nor shall I discuss that fertility of resources by which he supplied an army from an impoverished country, without disaffecting the population, that marvelous skill and conduct, by which he wrung the results of victory from the very jaws of defeat, and with inferior forces drove and scattered before him a well-appointed, disciplined enemy, flushed with the insolence of conquest; that self-reliance and persistence by which he refused every suggestion to abandon the southern campaign, and from the field of disaster declared "I will recover the Carolinas or perish in the attempt." How well he proved these words no idle boast, how well he kept his pledge I do not propose to repeat. All this has been recently done by an abler hand. A literary monument, more durable than marble, destined to a permanent place in the literature of the language, has just been completed to his memory, by one who inherits his blood and his name, and whose pen is worthy of his grandfather's sword.

But I cannot refrain from bringing to the attention of the Senate some passages from the eulogium pronounced upon General Greene, by Alexander Hamilton, before the society of the Cincinnati. It was expected that Washington would be present, but illness kept him away; but there were many there who had served with the orator and with the departed chief. No man was better fitted than Hamilton to discuss the character and services of Greene. No audience was better fitted to judge of the justness of the estimate which he put upon them:

"From you who knew and loved him I fear not the imputation of flattery, or enthusiasm, when I indulge an expectation that the name of Greene will at once awaken in your minds the images of whatever is noble and estimable in human nature. The fidelity of the portrait I shall draw will therefore have nothing to apprehend from your sentence. But I dare not hope that it will meet with equal justice from all others; or that it will entirely escape the cavils of ignorance and the shafts of envy. For high as this great man stood in the estimation of his country, the whole extent of his worth was little known. The situations in which he has appeared, though such as would have measured the faculties and exhausted the resources of men who might justly challenge the epithet of great, were yet incompetent to the full display of those various, rare, and exalted endowments, with which nature only now and then decorates a favorite, as if with intention to astonish mankind."

"As a man, the virtues of Greene are admitted; as a patriot, he holds a place in the foremost rank; as a statesman, he is praised; as a soldier, he is admired. But in the two last characters, especially in the last but one, his reputation falls far below his desert. It required a longer life, and still greater opportunities, to have enabled him to exhibit, in full day, the vast, I had almost said the *enormous* powers of his mind."

"The termination of the American war—not too soon for his wishes, nor for the welfare of his country, but too soon for his glory—put an end to his military career. The sudden termination of

his life cut him off from those scenes which the progress of a new, immense, and unsettled empire could not fail to open to the complete exertion of that universal and pervading genius which qualified him not less for the Senate than for the field.

"In forming our estimate, nevertheless, of his character, we are not left to supposition and conjecture, we are not left to vague indications or uncertain appearances, which partiality might varnish or prejudice discolor. We have a succession of deeds, as glorious as they are unequivocal, to attest the greatness and perpetuate the honors of his name," * * * * *

"He was not long there before the discerning eye of the American Fabius marked him out as the object of his confidence.

"His abilities entitled him to a preeminent share in the councils of his chief. He gained it, and he preserved it, amid all the checkered varieties of military vicissitude, and in defiance of all the intrigues of jealous and aspiring rivals,

"As long as the measures which conducted us safely through the first most critical stages of the war shall be remembered with approbation; as long as the enterprises of Trenton and Princeton shall be regarded as the dawns of that bright day which afterward broke forth with such resplendent luster; as long as the almost magic operations of the remainder of the memorable winter, distinguished not more by these events than by the extraordinary spectacle of a powerful army straitened within narrow limits by the phantom of a military force, and never permitted to transgress those limits with impunity, in which skill supplied the place of means, and disposition was the substitute for an army; as long, I say, as these operations shall continue to be the objects of curiosity and wonder, so long ought the name of Greene to be revered by a grateful country.

"To attribute to him a portion of the praise which is due, as well to the formation as to the execution of the plans that effected these important ends, can be no derogation from that wisdom and magnanimity which knew how to select and embrace counsels worthy of being pursued.

"The laurels of a Henry were never tarnished by the obligations he owed and acknowledged to a Sully."

After reviewing his service in the Jersey battles, the eulogist passes to the southern campaign, where Greene, by the express selection of Washington, was placed in command:

"Henceforth we are to view him on a more exalted eminence. He is no longer to figure in an ambiguous or secondary light; he is to shine forth the artificer of his own glory—the leader of armies and deliverer of States!" * * * * *

"Greene, without further delay, entered upon that busy, complicated, and extraordinary scene which may truly be said to form a phenomenon in war—a scene which almost continually presents us, on the one hand, with victories ruinous to the victors; on the other, with retreats beneficial to the vanquished; which exhibits to our admiration a commander almost constantly obliged to relinquish the field to his adversary, yet as constantly making acquisitions upon him; beaten to-day; to-morrow, without a blow, compelling the conqueror to remove the very object for which he had conquered, and in a manner to fly from the very foe which he had subdued."

Speaking of the bold determination of Greene after the battle of Guilford Court-House to return to South Carolina, instead of going to the rescue of Virginia, threatened by a junction of Cornwallis and Arnold, Hamilton says:

"This was one of those strokes that denote superior genius and constitute the sublime of war. It was Scipio leaving Hannibal in Italy to overcome him at Carthage!

"The success was answerable to the judicious boldness of the design. The enemy were divested of their acquisitions in South Carolina and Georgia with a rapidity which, if not ascertained, would be scarcely credible. In the short space of two months all their posts in the interior of the country were reduced. The perseverance, courage, enterprise, and resource displayed by the American General in the course of these events commanded the admiration even of his enemies. In vain was he defeated in one mode of obtaining his object; another was instantly substituted that answered the end. In vain was he repulsed from before a besieged fortress; he immediately found other means of compelling its defenders to relinquish their stronghold. Where force failed, address and stratagem still won the prize."

Washington measured his words with care and was chary of praise. In a letter to Greene, upon his retirement from the office of Quartermaster General, he wrote:

"You have conducted the various duties of it with capacity and diligence, entirely to my satisfaction, and as far as I have had an opportunity of knowing, with the strictest integrity. When you were prevailed on to undertake the office in March, 1778, it was in great disorder and confusion, and by extraordinary exertions you so arranged it as to enable the Army to take the field the moment it was necessary, and to move with rapidity after the enemy when they left Philadelphia. From that period to the present time your exertions have been equally great. They have appeared to me to be the result of system, and to have been well calculated to promote the interests and honor of your country. In fine, I cannot but add that the States have had in you, in my opinion, an able, upright, and diligent servant."

General Greene died at the age of forty-four. What might the country have reasonably expected from the full life of the man who, at so early an age, had accomplished so much? The administrative qualities that he manifested throughout his whole military service designated him for a great civil career which, probably, would not have stopped short of the highest honors of the Republic. But a true life is measured by what it accomplishes, not by the time that it lingers. He lived long enough to secure for his name a place high on the enduring records of his country, forever in the affections of the American people.

On the 8th of August, 1786, Congress, on a report of a committee consisting of Mr. Lee, Mr. Pettit, and Mr. Carrington, adopted the following resolutions:

"Resolved, That a monument be erected to the memory of Nathanael Greene, esq., at the seat of the Federal Government with the following inscription: 'Sacred to the memory of Nathanael Greene, esq., a native of the State of Rhode Island, who died on the 19th of June, 1786, late major general in the service of the United States, and commander of their Army in the southern department.'"

"The United States in Congress assembled, in honor of his patriotism, valor, and ability, have erected this monument.

"Resolved, That the Board of Treasury take order for the execution of the foregoing resolution."

This measure of national gratitude was not carried out.

We think that we shall not be charged with undue State pride if we submit that the marble which we now present to you is a worthy commencement of the collection which it inauguates, and which is to hand down to the future the glories of the past, the Valhalla of America. Others will be placed by its side, worthy of the august companionship. The future citizen will walk with patriotic awe among the effigies of his country's grandeur, and gather inspiration as he surveys their venerated forms. States yet to be admitted into the Union will crowd yonder Hall with the statues of their founders, defenders, and benefactors, till the great Dome of the Capitol shall be too small to cover the silent assembly of our immortal dead.

I send to the Chair a letter from the Governor of Rhode Island, which I ask to have read.

The Secretary read as follows:

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
PROVIDENCE, January 3, 1870.

SIR: In accordance with a resolution of Congress, passed July 2, 1864, inviting each State to furnish for the old Hall of the House of Representatives "two full-length marble statues of deceased persons who have been citizens thereof, and illustrious for their renown, or from civic or military services, such as each State shall determine to be worthy of national commemoration," the State of Rhode Island, by a vote of its General Assembly, has caused to be made two marble statues, one of Roger Williams, the Founder of the State, the other of Major General Nathanael Greene, a distinguished officer of the Army of the Revolution.

I have now the honor to inform you that the statue of Major General Nathanael Greene, by Mr. H. K. Browne, an American artist, is finished, and has been forwarded to Washington and delivered to the architect of the Capitol.

With high respect, I have the honor to remain your most obedient servant,

SETH PADELFORD,

To the PRESIDENT of the Senate of the United States, Washington, D. C.

PRESENTATION OF THE STATUE OF ROGER WILLIAMS.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, JANUARY 9, 1872.

Mr. President, I had not intended to interpose any remarks, at this time; for although it is always an easy and a pleasant duty for a Rhode Island man to discuss the character, to recount the history, and to celebrate the praises of the great Founder of our State, I have received no intimation, from those who had charge of the subject at home, that anything from me was expected or desired. And yet, sir, it is hardly possible for a Rhode Island Senator to remain entirely silent, when, in this high presence, the theme is Roger Williams; and I am sure you will not deem it an intrusion or an invasion of the province of my colleague, to whose abler hands this matter has been committed, and who has so well performed the duty assigned to him, if I detain you, very briefly, before the question is put.

My colleague has well said that it was a happy idea to convert the old Hall of the House of Representatives into the Pantheon of America. The idea originated with my distinguished friend who sits upon my right, [Mr. MORRILL, of Vermont,] then a leading member of the House, as he is now of the Senate. It was indeed a happy idea to assemble in the Capitol the silent effigies of the men who have made the annals of the nation illustrious; that here, overlooking our deliberations, inspiring our counsels, and animating us by their example, they may seem to guard the greatness which they founded or defended.

And I do not deem this proceeding an idle form, but rather a high ceremonial of the Republic; and I anticipate, with a patriotic pleasure, that it will be repeated, from time to time, until every State shall have sent her contribution to this assemblage of heroes and patriots and statesmen and orators and poets and scholars and divines—of men who, in every department of greatness, have added luster to the American name. And as often as this scene shall recur, when Virginia shall send to us the statue of Washington, which cannot be too often repeated in the Capitol; and with it that of Thomas Jefferson or of Patrick Henry; when North Carolina shall send us Nathaniel Macon, and South Carolina shall send us Sumter or Marion, and Georgia shall send us Oglethorpe; when Kentucky shall send us Daniel Boone and Henry Clay, and Tennessee shall send us Andrew Jackson, and Illinois shall send us Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, and Missouri shall send Thomas H. Benton; when New York shall send us Peter Stuyvesant and Alexander Hamilton; when Connecticut shall send us Roger Sherman and Jonathan Trumbull—I believe they are here already,—I know that the blood of both is represented in this Chamber by men coming from States that were not born when the names which their Senators worthily bear were first made illustrious; when Vermont shall send us the stalwart form of that hero who thundered at the gates of Ticonderoga “in the name of the Continental Congress and the great Jehovah;” when New Jersey shall send us the great grandfather of the Senator who sits on the opposite side of the

Chamber [Mr. STOCKTON] and the uncle of the Senator who sits nearer me, [Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN;] when Pennsylvania shall send us William Penn and Benjamin Franklin, and when Massachusetts, pausing in the embarrassment of her riches, looking down the long list of her sons who, in arms, in arts, and in letters, in all the departments of greatness, have contributed to her glory, shall, with, hesitating fingers, select two to represent that glory here; then, and on every such occasion. I trust that the spirit of party will cease, that the voice of faction will be hushed, and that we shall give an hour to the past. We shall be the wiser and better for it.

In all our history no name shines with a purer light than his whose memorial we have lately placed in the Capitol. In the history of all the world there is a no more striking example of a man grasping a grand idea, at once, in its full proportions, in all its completeness, and carrying it out, unflinchingly, to its remotest legitimate results.

Roger Williams did not merely lay the foundation of religious freedom, he constructed the whole edifice, in all its impregnable strength, in all its imperishable beauty. Those who have followed him, in the same spirit, have not been able to add anything to the grand and simple words in which he enunciated the principle, nor to surpass him in the exact fidelity with which he reduced it to the practical business of government.

Religious freedom, which now, by general consent, underlies the foundation principles of civilized government, was, at that time, looked upon as a wilder theory than any proposition, moral, political, or religious, that has since engaged the serious attention of mankind. It was regarded as impracticable, disorganizing, impious, and, if not utterly subversive of social order, it was not so only because its manifest absurdity would prevent any serious effort to enforce it. The lightest punishment deemed due to its confessor was to drive him out into the howling wilderness. Had he not met with more Christian treatment from the savage children of the forest than he had found from "the Lord's anointed," he would have perished in the beginning of his experiment.

Mr. President, fame, what we call human glory, renown, is won on many fields and in many varieties of human effort. Some clutch it, with bloody hands, amid the smoke and thunder of battle. Some woo it in the quiet retreats of study, till the calm seclusion is broken by the plaudits of admiring millions, of every tongue and of every clime. Some, in contests, which, if not bloody, are too often bitter and vindictive, seek it in the forum, amid "the applause of listening senates," caught up and echoed back by the tumultuous cheers of popular adulation. All these enjoy, while they live, the renown which gilds their memories with unfading glory. The praise which attends them is their present reward. It stimulates them to greater exertions and sustains them in higher flights. And it is just and right.

But there is a fame of another kind, that comes in another way, that comes unsought, if it comes at all; for the first condition for those who achieve it is that they shall not seek it. When a man, in the communion of his own conscience, following the lessons of his own convictions, determines what it is his duty to do, and, in obscurity and discouragement, with no companions but difficulty and peril, goes out to do it—when such a man establishes a great principle of human conduct or succeeds in achieving a great amelioration or a great benefit to the human race, without the expectation or the desire of reward, in present honor or in future renown, the fame that shines a glory around his brow is a reflection from the "pure white light," in which the angels walk, around the throne of God.

Such a man was Roger Williams. No thought of himself, no idea of recompense or of praise interfered to sully the perfect purity of his motives, the perfect disinterestedness of his conduct. Laboring for the highest benefit of his fellow-men, he was entirely indifferent to their praises. He knew, for God, whose prophet he was, had revealed it to him, that the great principle for which he contended, and for which he suffered, founded in the eternal fitness of things, would endure forever. He did not inquire if his name would survive a generation. In his vision of the future, he saw mankind emancipated from the thralldom of priesthood, from the blindness of bigotry, from the cruelties of intolerance; he saw the nations walking forth in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; he saw no memorial of himself, in marble or in bronze, or in the general admiration of mankind. More than two centuries have passed since he flourished; nearly two centuries have passed since he died, buried like Moses, for "no man knoweth of his sepulcher;" and now the great doctrine which he taught pervades the civilized world. A grateful State sends up here the ideal image of her Founder and her Father. An appreciative nation receives it, and, through her accredited representatives, pledges herself to preserve it among her most precious treasures.



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